

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, CA
SUBJECT: CEQ MUTES RADICAL IMAGE

REF: (A) 76 QUEBEC 384; (B) 76 QUEBEC 359

1. QUEBEC'S 70,000 MEMBER FRENCH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' UNION, THE CENTRALE DE L ENSEIGNEMENT DU QUEBEC (CEQ), HAA DECIDED TO MODIFY ITS STANCE VIS-A-VIS QUEBEC GOVT FOLLOWING ELECTION OF PARTI QUEBECOIS IN PROVINCE. AT A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL'S GENERAL COUNCIL HELD IN MONTREAL JANUARY 13-15, THE 150 MEMBERS VOTED TO ACCEPT A PROPOSITION CALLING ON UNION CENTRAL TO "PROFIT FROM PRESENT CHANGED POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN PROVINCE TO HOLD CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVT." THIS POLICY TURNABOUT CAME ABOUT AS A RESULT OF A PAPER WRITTEN BY CEQ'S PRESS RELATIONS OFFICER. THE PAPER, GIVEN WIDE PUBLICITY IN PROVINCIAL PRESS, URGED CEQ TO REPLACE HARD-LINE MARXIST STANCE WITH OPEN SUPPORT OF NEWLY-ELECTED

PQ GOVT. ALTHOUGH THE GENERAL COUNCIL DID NOT GO AS FAR AS DOCUMENT SUGGESTED, IN OFFICIALLY SUPPORTING NEW PROVINCIAL GOVT, ANNOUNCED REVISION OF UNION POLICY NEVERTHELESS SIGNALS DEPARTURE FROM FORMER RADICAL IDEOLOGICAL STANCE. THIS NEW
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MORE AMICABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HELP EASE THE SOCIAL TENSIONS CREATED BY THE DAGGERS-DRAW RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTED BETWEEN THE CEQ AND THE FORMER LIBERAL GOVERNMENT.

2. CEQ HAS BEEN NOTED IN RECENT YEARS FOR LEFTIST TENDENCIES OF MANY OF ITS MOST OUTSPOKEN LEADERS AND ITS HARSH CRITISM OF LIBERAL GOVT. HOWEVER, IT WAS FORCED TO REEVALUATE ITS ATTITUDE

FOLLOWING LAST NOVEMBER'S ELECTION OF PARTI QUEBECOIS GOVT IN PROVINCE (REF B). A MAJORITY OF CEQ MEMBERS VOTED FOR PQ IN ELECTIONS AND, IN FACT, 14 PQ DEPUTIES ELECTED TO QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ARE MEMBERS OF CEQ. ANOTHER EVENT WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE PROMPTED CEQ TO RETHINK ITS PHILOSOPHY WAS ATTACK BY JEAN GERIN-LAJOIE, PRESIDENT OF QUEBEC WING OF UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA. IN DECEMBER 7 SPEECH TO STEELWORKERS' CONVENTION, GERIN-LAJOI BLASTED BOTH CEQ AND CONFEDERATION OF NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS (CNTU) FOR THEIR "MARXIST LEANINGS," WHICH HE TERMED DANGEROUS TO HEALTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN PROVINCE. (SEE REF A). GERIN-LAJOIE WENT ON TO SAY THAT LEFT-WING IDEOLOGY OF CEQ AND CNTU LEADERS GOES COUNTER TO ATTITUDES OF UNION MEMBERS AND BEARS LITTLE RELEVANCE TO QUEBEC'S PRESENT NEEDS. APPEARANCE OF QUEBEC PREMIER RENE LEVESQUE AT CONVENTION WAS SEEN AS TACIT ENDORSEMENT BY PQ GOVT OF GERIN-LAJOIE'S CRITICISM OF RADICAL IDEOLOGIES WITHIN CEQ AND CNTU. THIS PQ ENDORSEMENT OF GERIN-LAJOIE'S CRITICISM APPEARS TO HAVE ELECTED SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE IN CEQ.

3. LAST WEEK'S APPEARANCE OF DOCUMENT WRITTEN BY CEQ PRESS RELATIONS OFFICER HUBERT SACY PREPARED GROUND FOR CHANGE WITHIN UNION CENTRAL OVER POSITION TO BE TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO PROVINCIAL GOVT. SACY WROTE IN HIS DOCUMENT THAT CEQ WAS FAR FROM BEING MARXIST ORGANIZATION IT APPEARED, THAT ITS "WORDS DID NOT ALWAYS CORRESPOND WITH ITS DEEDS." HE ACCUSED RANK OF FILE OF FOLLOWING HERD INSTINCT - AUTOMATICALLY VOTING LEFTIST ON ISSUES WITHOUT DISCUSSION IN ORDER NOT TO APPEAR REACTIONARY. HE CITED EXAMPLE OF MAJOR STUDY ON POLICY ORIENTATION WHICH

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WAS OVERWHELMING APPROVED BY DELEGATES AT RECENT CEQ CONVENTION. IT WAS PASSED UNREAD AND FOLLOWING ONLY 35 SECONDS OF DEBATE. SACY CALLED ON CEQ TO REALISTICALLY RECOGNIZE FACT THAT PQ WAS PARTY OF CEQ, VOTED FOR BY MAJORITY OF UNION MEMBERS. WHEREAS, UNDER THE LIBERAL REGIME, THE UNION CENTRAL COULD ATTACK THE GOVT AT WILL, IT NOW FINDS ITSELF IN UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION OF EMBRACING IDEOLOGY OPPOSED TO GOVT WHICH MAJORITY OF MEMBERS SUPPORT.

4. FINAL RESOLUTION PASSED BY CEQ GENERAL COUNCIL DOES NOT GO AS FAR AS SACY DOCUMENT IN CONCILIATING CEQ WITH PROVINCIAL GOVT. WHILE COUNCIL RECOGNIZED THAT PQ WAS PARTY OF MAJORITY OF CEQ MEMBERS, AND THUS NOT TO BE REGARDED AS "THE ENEMY," ITS RESOLUTION MERELY CALLED ON UNION CENTRAL TO PARTICIPATE IN CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVT. EVEN PASSAGE OF THIS WATERED-DOWN RESOLUTION WAS HOTLY CONTESTED BY RADICALS WITHIN THE COUNCIL. THE COUNCIL ALSO FAILED TO GIVE ITS SUPPORT TO RESOLUTION FAVORING QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE, ALTHOUGH STATING INTENTION OF CEQ TO PARTICIPATE IN DEBATE ON SUBJECT. FINALLY, COUNCIL MEMBERS

STRESSED CEQ INTENTION TO PRESERVE UNION AUTONOMY AND PURSUE OBJECTIVES ON SCHOOL REFORM AND IMPROVED WORKERS' CONDITIONS. UNION DEMANDS INCLUDE ENDING GOVT SUBSIDIES TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND ENDING QUEBEC PARTICIPATION IN ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM.

5. COMMENT: PARTI QUEBECOIS ELECTION VICTORY HAS OBVIOUSLY FORCED CEQ TO REEXAMINE ITS PERSPECTIVES. NO LONGER CAN IT ACCUSE GOVT OF BEING "WHEELS OF CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION" WHEN PRESENT PQ GOVT IS CHOICE OF MAJORITY OF CEQ MEMBERS. THIS CHANGE OF POLITICAL ORIENTATION IN QUEBEC HAS SPARKED THE ACTIVE DEBATE PRESENTLY TAKING PLACE WITHIN CEQ OVER STANCE TO ADOPT VIS-A-VIS NEWLY-ELECTED PROVINCIAL GOVT. BESIDES BEING OF INTEREST TO PQ GOVT, MADE UP IN PART OF YOUNG INTELLECTUALS FROM CEQ OR SYMPATHETIC TO VIEWS HELD BY MOST OF ITS MEMBERS, THIS DEBATE SERVES TO POINT OUT SOME OF THE INCONGRUITIES WHICH HAVE EXISTED WITHIN THE UNION CENTRAL. FOR YEARS, CEQ HAS DISPLAYED OUTWARD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEARANCE OF BEING HEAVILY MARXIST ORIENTED WHEN, IN FACT, MAJORITY OF MEMBERS ARE NOT MARXIST AT ALL. SACY DOCUMENT STATES THAT "IF THE CEQ IS A MARXIST ORGANIZATION - AND THAT IS FAR FROM CLEAR - IT BECAME SO WITHOUT FULLY BEING AWARE OF IT, WITHOUT THE MAJORITY OF DELEGATES AT POLICY CONVENTIONS BEING CONSCIOUS OF IT, WITHOUT A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF POLICY. SACY STATES, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT POLLS INDICATE MAJORITY OF TEACHERS ARE INDEPENDENTISTS AND SUPPORTERS OF PQ. CEQ THUS APPEARS TO BE MADE UP OF TWO FORCES- SMALL GROUP OF HIGHLY VOCAL RADICALS WHO HOLD POWER IN UNION CENTRAL AND DICTATE POLICY AND LARGER GROUP MADE UP OF NATIONALIST, PQ-SUPPORTING RANK AND FILE WHO, UNTIL NOW, HAVE MINDLESSLY ALLOWED RADICAL LEADERSHIP TO PUBLICLY REPRESENT THEM. HOWEVER, HEATED DEBATES OF LAST WEEK'S CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING APPEAR TO INDICATE GROWING DISSATISFACTION AMONG MEMBERSHIP WITH MARXIST IDEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP. WHILE RESOLUTION PASSED BY CENTRAL COUNCIL WAS MODEST VICTORY FOR PQ SUPPORTERS IN CEQ, IT INDICATES A DEPARTURE FROM FORMER HARD-LINE MARXIST STANCE OF UNION CENTRAL WITH ALL THE RELATED "CLASS STRUGGLE" RHETORIC. THIS APPEARS TO BE A HEALTHY TURN FOR THE UNION CENTRAL, AS CONTINUED DISREGARD OF MEMBERS' CONVICTIONS COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS SPLIT WITHIN UNION. A SIMILAR SITUATION EXISTED IN 1972 WHEN SEVERAL GROUPS, DISSATISFIED WITH IDEOLOGICAL VERBIAGE OF MOTHER UNION, BROKE AWAY FROM CNTU. MCNAMARA

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